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ABSTRACT

A study looked at the students enrolled in the college remedial reading program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Subjects were 171 students who were placed in the program. The study examined the characteristics of students who exited the reading program in one semester, those who persisted for two semesters to complete the requirement, and those who dropped out of school during the first semester. The major differences between the three groups of students who were required to take reading were in test scores, racial make-up, sex, and age. The group of one-semester completers had the highest test scores and were predominantly white, whereas the two semester persisters and reading dropouts were predominantly black. The dropouts were disproportionately older than the other two groups. This information allows the administration and staff to adapt the reading program to better accomplish its goals. (Three tables of data are included.) (MG)

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Characteristics of Freshmen in a College Remedial Reading Program

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Abstract

Characteristics of Freshmen in a College Remedial Reading Program

The study looks at the students enrolled in the college remedial reading program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM), a small campus of the University of Arkansas System located in the rural southeast region of Arkansas. The study examined the characteristics of students who exited the reading program in one semester, those who persisted for two semesters to complete the requirement, and those who dropped out of school during their first semester. A comparison is also made to the 354 entering freshmen that year who were not required to take remedial reading.

Developmental reading programs are a rapidly growing curriculum area on college campuses (Bray, 1984). Who are the students being served in these programs? Although some generalizations have been made in the past about the "typical remedial college student," (Aron, 1978) it has been suggested that much more specific data is needed.

The present study looks at the students enrolled in the college reading program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM), a small campus of the University of Arkansas System located in the rural southeast region of Arkansas. No community college exists in this region. The study examined the characteristics of students who exited the reading program in one semester (completers), those who persisted for two semesters to complete the requirement (persisters), and those who dropped out of school during their first semester.

Students were required to enter the reading program if they scored at or below the 25th percentile on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. Of the 525 entering freshmen for whom data is available, 171 were placed in the remedial reading program. Table 1 contains demographic information and student characteristics of these 171 remedial students. Table 2 contains mean test scores and Table 3 contains information on parent education and career aspirations.

Insert Table 1 about here

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Of the 354 entering freshmen not required to take reading, 139 were male and 215 female. Seventy-nine percent was White and 21% Black. After two semesters, they had a dropout rate of 51%.

The following are profiles of the three groups of remedial students. The typical one-semester completer was a traditional age male white freshman who was not employed, did not have any family responsibilities and was enrolled for thirteen semester credit hours. As a group the completers had higher ACT, Nelson-Denny, and Estes attitude toward reading scores than the two-semester persisters and dropouts.

A typical two-semester persister was a male Black, of traditional age, was not employed, did not have any family responsibilities, and was enrolled for thirteen semester hours which included remedial mathematics, remedial English and College Skills. As a group the persisters had lower Nelson-Denny, ACT English, ACT Mathematics, and ACT Composite, and Estes attitude toward reading scores than the completers and dropouts.

The typical dropout from reading was a female Black student who was not employed, did not have any family responsibilities,

and was enrolled for thirteen hours which included remedial mathematics, remedial English and College Skills. As a group the dropouts were older than the completers and persisters.

The major differences between the three groups of students who were required to take reading were in test scores, racial make-up, sex, and age. The group of one-semester completers had the highest test scores and was predominantly White, whereas the two-semester persisters and reading dropouts were predominantly Black. The dropouts were disproportionately older than the other two groups.

In summary, it is felt that this information on remedial student characteristics will better allow the administration and staff to adapt the reading program to better accomplish its goals: identifying students with reading deficiencies, diagnosing their specific areas of need, and providing a program of instruction that will significantly increase the probability that they will be able to successfully cope with the demands of college level work.

References

Aron, H. (1978). A community college reading and study skills program: What is it, what does it do? Journal of Reading, 22, 231-235.

Bray, D. (1984). The evaluation of remedial programs in the community colleges. Sacramento City College. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED243 546).

Table 1

Demographic Information and Student Characteristics

	Completers		Persisters		Dropouts	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age						
16-17	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
18-19	73	80.2	46	85.2	13	50.0
20-21	10	11.0	6	11.2	3	11.5
22-23	1	1.1	0	0.0	2	7.7
24+	4	4.4	1	1.9	7	26.9
N/A	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	3.8
Sex						
Male	52	57.1	33	61.1	11	42.3
Female	39	42.9	21	38.9	15	57.7
Race						
White	65	71.4	19	35.2	9	34.6
Black	26	28.6	35	64.8	17	65.4
Employed 1st Enrollment						
Yes	21	23.1	10	18.5	5	19.2
No	70	76.9	44	81.5	20	76.9
N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.8
Family Responsibilities						
Yes	6	6.6	2	3.7	3	11.5
No	85	93.4	52	96.3	23	88.5
Extra Curricular Activities						
Yes	21	23.1	24	44.4	8	30.8
No	70	76.9	30	55.6	18	69.2
Remedial Mathematics						
Yes	45	49.5	41	75.9	17	65.4
No	43	47.3	13	24.1	9	34.6
N/A	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Remedial English						
Yes	54	59.3	51	94.4	20	76.9
No	34	37.4	3	5.6	6	23.1
N/A	3	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
College Skills						
Yes	61	67.0	48	88.9	21	80.8
No	28	30.8	5	9.3	5	19.2
N/A	2	2.2	1	1.9	0	0.0

Table 2

Mean Scores

	Mean Scores		
	1 Semester Completers	2 Semesters (Persisters)	Dropouts During first semester
ACT Standard Scores			
English	14	9	11
Mathematics	10	7	8
Social Studies	10	8	8
Science	15	12	12
Composite	12	9	10
Estes Attitude Toward Reading Raw Scores	52	48	50
Nelson-Denny Pretest Standard Scores			
Vocabulary	293	282	284
Comprehension	291	287	288
Total Reading	291	284	285
Nelson-Denny Posttest Standard Scores			
Vocabulary	301	294	--
Comprehension	301	293	--
Total Reading	301	293	--

Table 3

Parents Education and Career Aspirations

	Completers		Persisters		Dropouts	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Father's Education						
Completed 6th Grade	1	1.1	1	1.9	4	15.4
Completed 8th Grade	1	1.1	3	5.6	2	7.7
Completed 10th Grade	12	13.2	6	11.1	3	11.5
Completed High School	48	52.7	28	51.9	5	19.2
Some College	9	9.9	7	13.0	3	11.5
College Graduate	5	5.5	3	5.6	3	11.5
Graduate School	2	2.2	3	5.6	0	0.0
N/A	13	14.3	3	5.6	6	23.1
Mother's Education						
Completed 6th Grade	3	3.3	2	3.7	4	15.4
Completed 8th Grade	7	7.7	4	7.4	1	3.8
Completed 10th Grade	6	6.6	7	13.0	3	11.5
Completed High School	37	40.7	22	40.7	8	30.8
Some College	13	14.3	4	7.4	4	15.4
College Graduate	7	7.7	4	7.4	3	11.5
Graduate School	3	3.3	3	5.6	1	3.8
N/A	15	16.5	8	14.8	2	7.7
Major						
Agriculture	2	2.2	1	1.9	0	0.0
Business	15	16.5	16	29.6	4	15.4
Education	7	7.7	2	3.7	0	0.0
Forestry	5	5.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
General Studies	7	7.7	1	1.9	4	15.4
Music	4	4.4	0	0.0	1	3.8
Nursing	5	5.5	3	5.6	2	7.7
Pre-Law	1	1.1	1	1.9	0	0.0
Pre-Medicine	2	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Pre-Pharmacy	0	0.0	1	1.9	0	0.0
Undecided	20	22.0	7	13.0	4	15.4
Other	4	4.4	4	7.4	7	26.9
N/A	19	20.9	18	33.3	4	15.4